



## Small Projects Day, Section 1: Project Proposal

1. **Responsible Official:** John Sinclair, Forest Supervisor, Green Mountain National Forest
2. **Project Name:** West Hill Road Bridge Replacement Special Use Permit
3. **Project Location:** U.S. Tract # 507D, West Hill Road, Town of Rochester, Windsor County, Vermont
4. **Project Contact:** Jen Edmonds, Natural Resource Specialist, (802)747-6746, [jennifer.edmonds@usda.gov](mailto:jennifer.edmonds@usda.gov)
5. **Purpose and Need** (*Why here? Why now? Why is the outcome desired?*): The purpose and need of this project is to respond to an application submitted by the Town of Rochester (the Town), Vermont to replace an existing single-lane road bridge over Brandon Brook on West Hill Road (FR 41). The bridge dates to 1919 and is past its design life. The structure is causing bank scour on Brandon Brook, a tributary of the White River, and its rated load weight is inadequate for many commercial uses serving residences on the road, town maintenance equipment, and logging trucks associated with the Robinson Integrated Resource Project. The Robinson Integrated Resource Project recently approved a variety of timber management opportunities located in the West Hill area. Without the replacement and upgrade of the bridge timber management opportunities in this area would need to be foregone.
6. **Project Description** (*What will we be doing? How will we do it? Where is the project located?*): The project would replace the bridge with a new structure meeting the load limit required for local and USFS needs. The Town currently has a 3 rod right of way (approximately 50 feet) for West Hill Road. The Town intends to stay within the existing right of way, but to ensure that the southern approach to the bridge is sustainable there may be a need to shift the bridge slightly downstream onto National Forest System lands (NFS). If this occurs it would require the issuance of an easement to the Town from the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). Additionally, the town would need to occupy portions of NFS lands outside the Town's the right of way with heavy equipment and materials during bridge construction. This project would be funded through a Federal Lands Access Program grant from the State of Vermont. A successful outcome would enhance access to the West Hill area for residents, emergency and town services, habitat management and users of the GMNF. Design and engineering work would be done during summer 2020 to establish physical specifications, including duration and timing of construction and work areas needed for construction. Design standards will conform to AASHTO and VTrans, for accommodating an HL-93 load. Construction would completed in 2021.

This project would include issuance of a special use permit with a term of two years for the construction of a new bridge on West Hill Road (FR41) at its intersection with State Route 73 in Rochester, Vermont. In the event that the most sustainable location for the bridge is on National Forest Lands, an easement would be issued to the Town of Rochester. Activities on National Forest System (NFS) lands would consist of:

- Storage of construction material (gravel, blocks, bridge components, equipment) at designated locations (on the northwest corner of West Hill Road and Route 73 and in the Chittenden Brook parking area at Route 73)



- Access to the site across NFS lands in the area to the south of the existing bridge
- Potential issuance of a long-term permit or easement to the Town of Rochester for the maintenance of a new road right of way, bridge abutment, and/or the bridge, should sustainable design necessitate the shift of the road and bridge slightly downstream
- Bridge replacement activities would require temporary construction of access roads, instream work, and the removal of standing trees. All necessary permits for these activities would be obtained by the Town of Rochester prior to work commencing.

All work would be conducted by the Town of Rochester and/or its contractors. The area of NFS land involved for both the storage area and bridge relocation is not expected to exceed one acre in size total.

The following mitigation measures would be included in the permit:

Wildlife:

If tree removal (greater than 4") is required on FS lands, check with district biological staff regarding bat surveys.

Soils:

Sites for servicing and refueling construction equipment would be located at least 50 feet away from the top of the stream bank and approved by a Forest Officer. Fuel leaks from such equipment would be repaired immediately. A supply of acceptable absorbent materials would be kept on the job site (where such equipment is used) for use in the event of a hazardous fluid spill. Acceptable absorbent materials are those that are manufactured specifically for the containment and cleanup of hazardous materials.

Fisheries:

Explore the opportunity to use a wildlife-passage friendly design at this high priority crossing area.

Non-native Invasive Plants:

All equipment brought in to implement the project would be clean prior to accessing the site. To prevent spreading wild chervil in the project area, wild chervil would be prevented from flowering and going to seed. Implementers, or town staff, would choose one of the following methods:

1. Hand pull wild chervil plants prior to implementation, and again as needed, throughout implementation. The extent of the area to be pulled would be the extent of the area where equipment and materials are staged, plus the extent of the area where implementers are working. Pile pulled plants on site, away from the stream or any vehicle or foot traffic, cover with weed fabric weighted by branches or logs, and monitor for escaped plants.
2. Mow or weed-whack the affected area as described above every 10 days or as needed so that wild chervil never has the chance to flower. Regardless of choice of method of control, consult with botany staff regarding safety measures for handling wild chervil prior to start of control work.

## 7. Forest Plan Management Area: MA 3.1 Diverse Forest Use



**8. Forest Plan Compliance** (*How does this project comply with the Land & Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) direction?*):

Forest Plan Goal 8: Provide a sustainable supply of forest products.

Forest Plan Goal 14: Provide a safe, efficient and effective Forest transportation system that meets both the needs of the Forest Service and the public.

Forest-wide Management Direction 2.3.18: road Operations and Maintenance Standard 1: The Forest Service shall cooperate with State and town governments and highway departments in managing town-maintained roadways through the Green Mountain National Forest.

**9. Exclusion Category:** 36 CFR 220.6 (e)(3) Approval, modification, or continuation of minor special uses of NFS lands that require less than five contiguous acres of land.

**10. Expected Implementation Date:** September 2020

